

Volunteer Handbook

WOLFNER LIBRARY FOR THE BLIND AND PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED

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VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

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Welcome Volunteer!

Wolfner Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped welcomes you to an exciting new adventure. It is our hope to provide you with a solid training foundation, which includes information concerning policies, procedures, goals, mission, program responsibilities and general guidelines as they relate to your experience.

This manual has been written to answer basic questions about volunteering for Wolfner Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. We ask that you become familiar with the information presented. As a volunteer, you will be expected to function within the guidelines provided. If a situation should occur that is not addressed in the following pages, contact the Coordinator of Volunteers.

The goal of the Wolfner Library volunteer program is to have volunteers in communities throughout the state of Missouri. This will allow us to expand and enhance the services that the Library provides to the citizens of Missouri, while providing a satisfying service experience for volunteers. The volunteer's role is to assist staff and enhance services.

Volunteer positions are designed to match a volunteer's skills, interests and schedule. Opportunities exist for volunteers to learn new skills, give to the community, enjoy the appreciation of staff and clients, and meet new people.

The volunteer program seeks to:

- *Provide opportunities for volunteers to actively participate in and make a meaningful contribution to the operations of the Library.*
- *Provide volunteers with a positive, pleasant experience.*
- *Build public awareness of the services provided by Wolfner Library.*
- *Develop closer ties to the community served.*
- *Increase effectiveness of paid staff.*

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Secretary Of State

The Secretary of State's Office has many diverse responsibilities, all linked by the common theme of information. The office is responsible for collecting, compiling, storing and publishing a variety of state documents. The Secretary of State, as keeper of the Great Seal of the State of Missouri, authenticates official acts of the Governor. In addition, the Secretary of State serves as the chief elections official in Missouri.

Functions of the Office are divided into six areas: Elections, Securities, Business Services, State Library, Records Services, and Administrative Services. The Executive Deputy Secretary of State is charged by law with implementing the policies and procedures of the secretary, and supervising day-to-day operations of the office. There are approximately 260 employees of the secretary of state's office.

State Library

The major functions of the State Library are to provide direct library and information service in support of the executive and legislative branches of Missouri state government, to provide library service to blind and physically handicapped residents of Missouri and to promote the development and improvement of library services throughout the state.

Sara Ann Parker is the Missouri State Librarian. She began her duties as State Librarian in June of 1995. Parker oversees divisions for library development, reference services, and the Wolfner Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped.

Wolfner Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped

The mission of the Wolfner Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is to provide informational and recreational books and magazines on cassette, on record, and in braille formats free-of-charge to Missourians who are unable to use standard print materials due to a physical disability. Wolfner Library is part of the National Library Service (NLS) national network of cooperative libraries. The purpose of the network is to make recorded and braille books and magazines available in a manner which is both accessible and convenient for the readers who use the library. Therefore, circulation is done through the mail.

Before 1924, the St. Louis Public Library loaned braille books to the adult blind. In 1931, Congress passed the Pratt-Smoot Bill, and eighteen (18) regional libraries were selected, including the St. Louis library, to become the National Library Service for the Blind. In 1937, private citizens raised funds for a building, which was dedicated in memory of Dr. Henry L. Wolfner, a noted St. Louis eye specialist. In 1977, Wolfner Library became a division of the Missouri State Library. In 1985, the library was moved to Jefferson City.

In the ensuing years, additional federal laws broadened the eligibility for the library to include children and the physically challenged. The book and magazine collections were made more accessible by providing materials not only in braille, but also on record and on cassette. To assist readers in reading the "talking" (recorded) books, Wolfner Library loans playback machines at no charge.

Books are available through Wolfner Library in braille, on cassette and on record. In addition, the library houses a small collection of large print books, mainly children's titles. Books in any or all of these media can be borrowed. Wolfner Library's cassettes and records are recorded at a slower speed than commercial recordings; the cassettes will not play on a standard cassette player. Also, the cassettes are recorded on four tracks. This means that there are four (4) sides to every cassette. Wolfner Library loans special equipment on which to play recorded books. There is no charge or deposit required for the equipment.

Mission Statement

The Missouri State Library, as a department of the Office of the Secretary of State, will:

Strive to ensure that all Missourians, including those who cannot use print, have equal access to library services.

The mission of Wolfner Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped is to provide informational, educational, and recreational materials in non-standard print formats to Missourians who are unable to use standard print materials due to physical impairment, and to provide disability-related information to the public.

Volunteers play a vital role in providing library services to Missouri citizens with blindness, low vision or other conditions that make the use of standard printed materials difficult or impossible. Volunteers make generous contributions of time, talent, and energy. These contributions are invaluable in accomplishing our mission to provide reading materials to Missourians who cannot use regular print.

Volunteers are an integral part of the Wolfner program. They bring a multitude of skills and talents, which better enable us to serve the community. They provide new perspectives, inspire us with their enthusiasm and commitment, and give us access to resources that would otherwise be unavailable to us. They bring to us the community's point of view, and take back to the community word of our services.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM WOLFNER LIBRARY:

Wolfner volunteers have the right to:

- Have a clearly defined job description for each assignment.
- Be given appropriate assignments according to skill interests, availability, and training.
- Receive adequate orientation and training for any assignment accepted.
- Receive clear instructions/guidelines about assigned tasks.
- Be provided with proper supplies and work space.
- Say “no” if unable or unwilling to volunteer for something.
- Receive regular feedback about performance.
- Expect that volunteer records will be kept documenting volunteer experience, positions held, training, evaluation and commendation.
- Expect to be treated as a respected member of the work team.
- Expect to be informed of any changes in policies or procedures.
- Be given appropriate expressions of appreciation and recognition.
- Be treated with respect and dignity.
- Express their opinions and ideas. We welcome suggestions about assignments and the volunteer program.

WHAT WOLFNER LIBRARY EXPECTS OF YOU

Volunteers are responsible for:

- Attending a "Volunteer Orientation" session.
- Following through with any commitments made.
- Knowing assigned duties and doing them promptly, correctly and pleasantly.
- Participating in an evaluation process.
- Following proper procedures, adhering to rules, regulations and standards.
- Sharing personality and skills as well as time.
- Cooperating with staff and fellow volunteers and maintaining a good attitude.
- Completing time sheets in order to keep an accurate record of hours served.
- Wearing a name tag at all times when acting on behalf of or in Wolfner Library.
- Keeping all communications with or concerning clients strictly confidential.
- Reporting for duty on time.
- Informing the volunteer coordinator as soon as possible of any planned absence or lateness.
- Treating the public and fellow workers honestly and politely at all times.

Volunteer Policies and Procedures

When you are a new volunteer at Wolfner Library, you may feel a little strange in your new surroundings. This is normal, and should be expected. Your fellow volunteers, the staff, and your volunteer coordinator want to help you get off to a good start. Feel free to ask them for help.

One of the first things you should do is carefully read this Handbook. It is designed to answer many of your questions about policies and procedures, what is expected of you, and what you can expect from us.

Attendance

Once a volunteer has chosen a work schedule, it is expected that s/he will be available at the agreed-upon time. If you must miss a work session, please notify the Coordinator of Volunteers as soon as possible.

Anniversary Date

The first day you report to volunteer is your “official” anniversary date.

Background Check

In order to ensure the safety of our users and our volunteers, it may be necessary at times to do background checks for certain positions. Each volunteer is asked to sign a release allowing us to do so if deemed necessary.

Bulletin Boards

A volunteer bulletin board will be maintained by the Coordinator of Volunteers. It will be our way of keeping you informed about new policies, changes in procedures, recognition items, and special events. Information of general interest will be posted on the bulletin board.

Confidential Information

We have an obligation to our users to maintain their confidentiality and respect their privacy. As you work with the staff, you might be exposed to information of a confidential nature. Such information is not to be shared with anyone else including family, friends or acquaintances. No one is permitted to remove or make copies of any records, reports or documents.

Dependability

Please be prompt and consistent, and in your assigned area when expected. We rely on you to do the work prepared for you, and if you aren't there we need to make other arrangements.

Dress Code

Take your lead from the staff and dress appropriately for the job you are doing. It is best to neither overdress nor underdress. Casual clothing is fine, but we ask that your attire be neat and conservative. Volunteers shall be neat and clean in their person and attire when on duty.

Emergency Procedures

Volunteers are to immediately report every job-related injury, regardless of severity, to their staff contact. The Coordinator of Volunteers will maintain personal information to be used in case of emergency.

In case of a fire alarm, all persons should proceed to the nearest exit. From Wolfner Library Public Services, go to the front door. From Wolfner Technical Services, go out the dock area doors.

In case of a tornado alarm, all persons should proceed to the nearest enclosed hallway or stairwell. From Wolfner Library Services, go to the back hallway close to the dock area. You may remain in Wolfner Technical Services area, because the space is enclosed and underground.

Do not use elevators in emergency situations.

Evaluations

To assess the effectiveness as well as the strengths and weaknesses of the Wolfner Volunteer Program, it will be necessary to periodically evaluate the program and the volunteers.

Exit Interviews

When a volunteer leaves the office, we would like to discuss the reasons for leaving and any other impressions that you may have about Wolfner Library in an exit interview. During the exit interview the volunteer can express him/herself freely. It is hoped that this will provide insights into possible improvements in the program. All information will be kept strictly confidential.

Facilities

Volunteers are welcome to use staff break rooms and rest room facilities.

Identification

Volunteers will be given a name tag each time they are working in the building. It should be worn whenever you're on duty, and returned before leaving, so it will be here the next time you volunteer. Volunteers working in the field will be issued name tags, and they should be worn when representing Wolfner Library.

Work Descriptions

We maintain a work description for each volunteer position. If you wish to see your volunteer work description, please see the volunteer coordinator.

Non-Discrimination

It is the policy of the Secretary of State's office to maintain a working environment free from all forms of discrimination or harassment, including that based on race, sex, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, or sexual orientation.

Parking

When working in the library, you are free to use the parking areas designated for our staff.

Smoking

The State Information Center is a non-smoking facility. If you smoke, there are outside places appropriate for you to enjoy a short break. Smoking is not allowed in the front of the building, but is allowed at the rear of the building and on the second floor cafeteria patio. Please be courteous and concerned about the needs of others.

Volunteers shall not use any tobacco products while in direct public contact.

Substance Abuse

For safety and security reasons, you are expected to report to work with no mood altering substances in your body. Possession, sale or use of mood altering substances while volunteering will not be tolerated.

Telephone Calls

Please avoid personal telephone calls, visits or other interruptions while on duty. Should anyone need to call you, they should call the Volunteer office. No volunteer shall make a long distance personal call that would be billed to the office.

Time sheets

It is important for volunteers to sign in and out each time they report for work. Accurate and up-to-date records are important. This information is used for volunteer recognition, budget purposes and program promotion. Volunteer hours accumulated in training will be included in your service hours.

Volunteers working in the library should sign in and out in the volunteer office. Volunteers who work outside the library should keep a record of hours worked and submit this record to the volunteer coordinator monthly.

Benefits of being a Wolfner Volunteer:

You will have an opportunity to share your skills.

You will be helping people who need you.

You will have the opportunity to get to know new people, and perhaps a new community.

You will have something to keep you busy and involved.

You will make new friends.

You will be demonstrating your commitment to a cause.

You will receive recognition and appreciation.

You will be doing something different.

You may be exploring a new career.

You will get 'out of the house'.

You will have an impact.

You will feel good.

You will have fun!

You will be challenged.

You will feel proud about what you're doing.

YOU ARE OUR MOST VALUABLE ASSET!